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Insights into hours worked, April 2021

Released 20/05/2021

Source: [Labour Force, Australia, April 2021](#)

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With many hours worked series returning to their pre-COVID levels, the ABS is planning to cease publishing this article on a monthly basis after the May 2021 issue (on 17 June 2021). The ABS will continue to monitor changes in hours worked and provide additional analysis when relevant.

Hours worked and employment

Hours worked decreased by 0.7% (in seasonally adjusted terms) between March and April 2021, while employment decreased by 0.2% or 30,600 people. This fall in seasonally adjusted hours worked in April reflects a larger number of people than usual taking leave over the Easter holiday period.

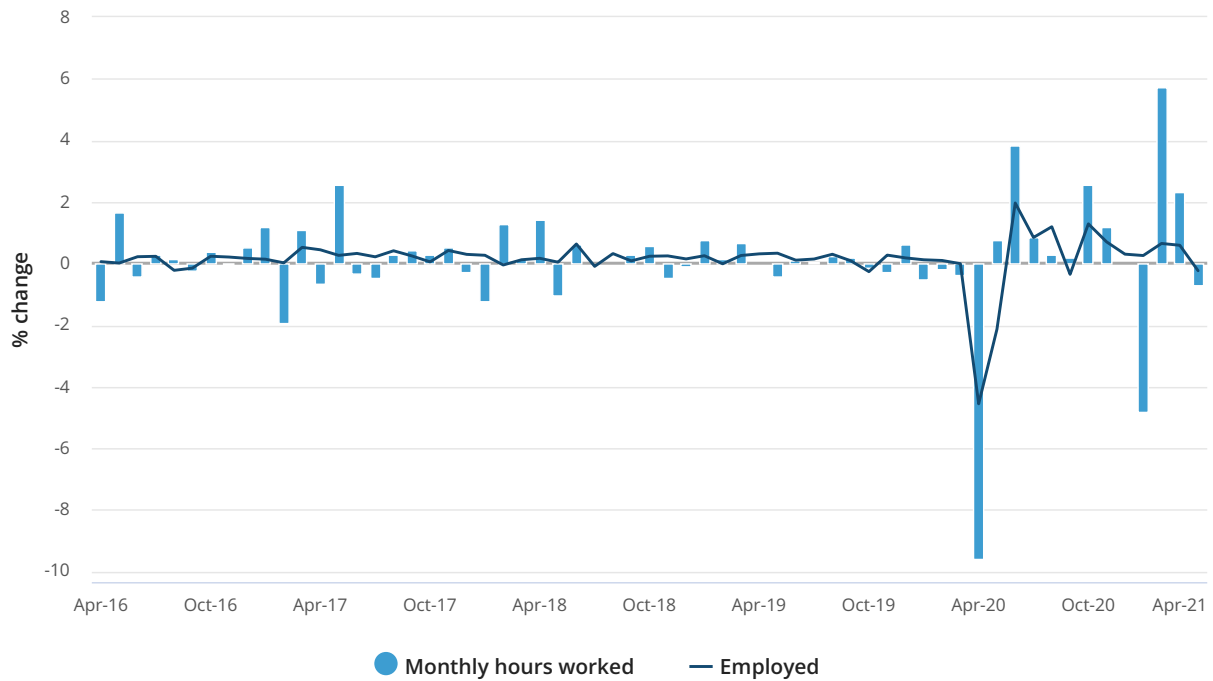
Chart 1 shows changes in hours worked and employment, indexed to March 2020, while Chart 2 shows monthly changes in hours worked and employment since April 2016.

Chart 1: Hours worked and employment index, Seasonally adjusted (March



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

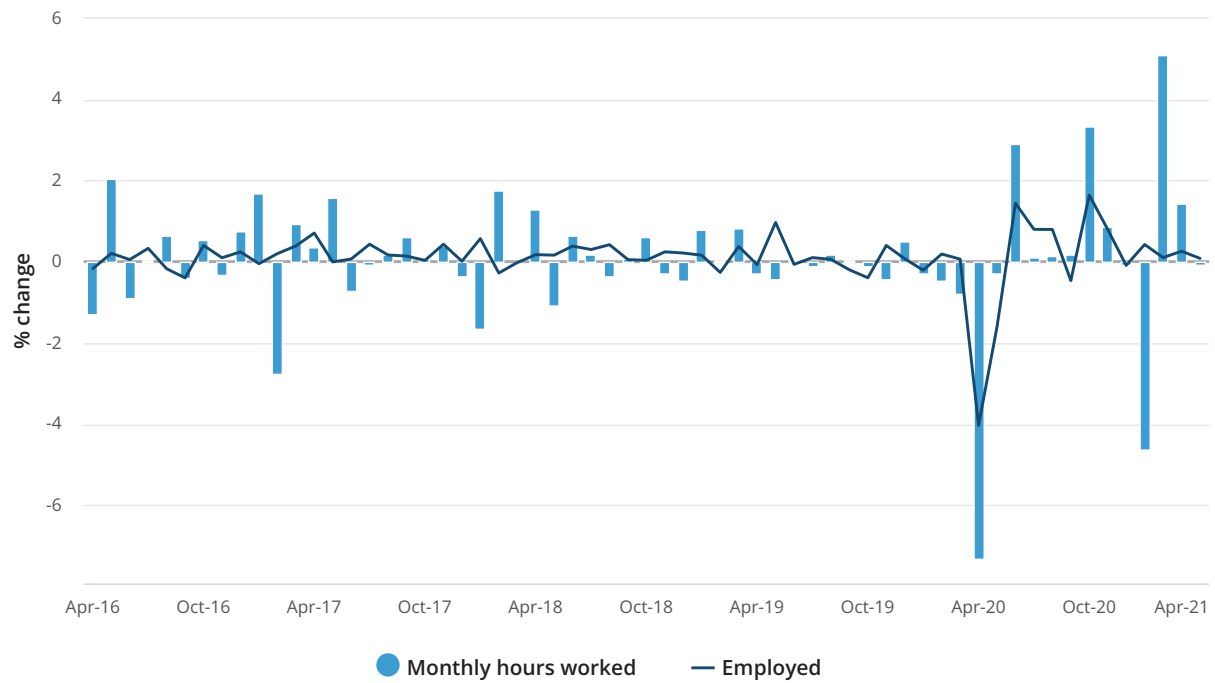
Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

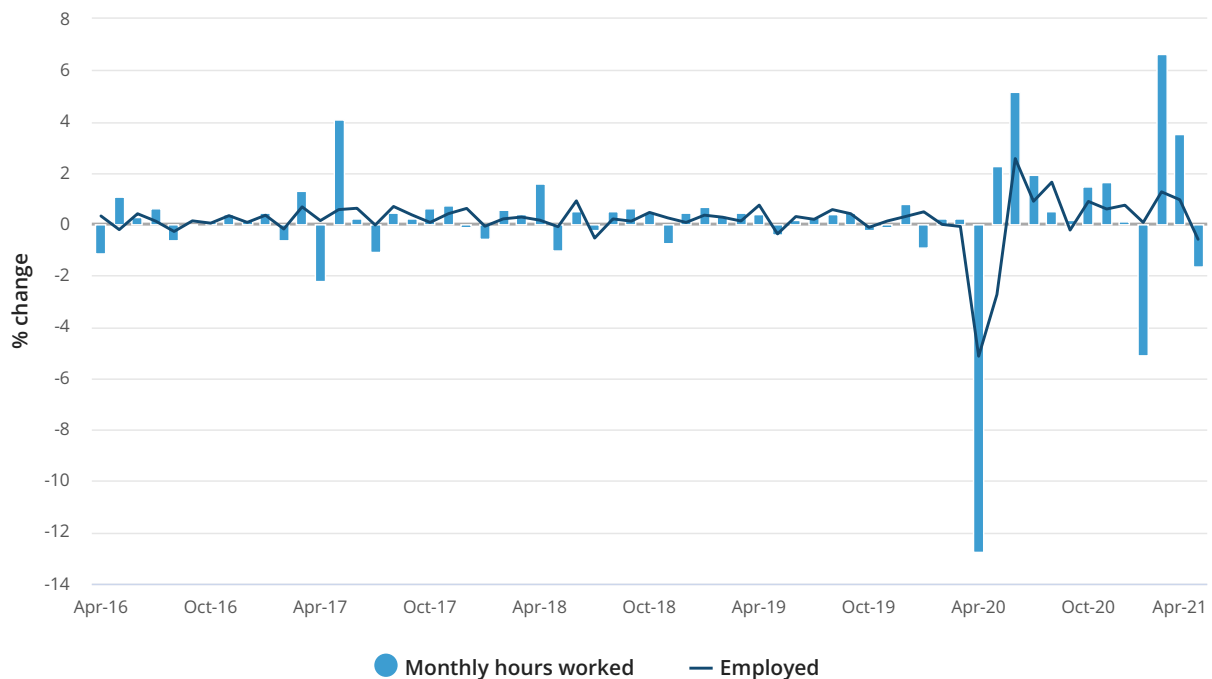
Changes in employment and hours worked for men and women

Table 2a: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Table 2b: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted



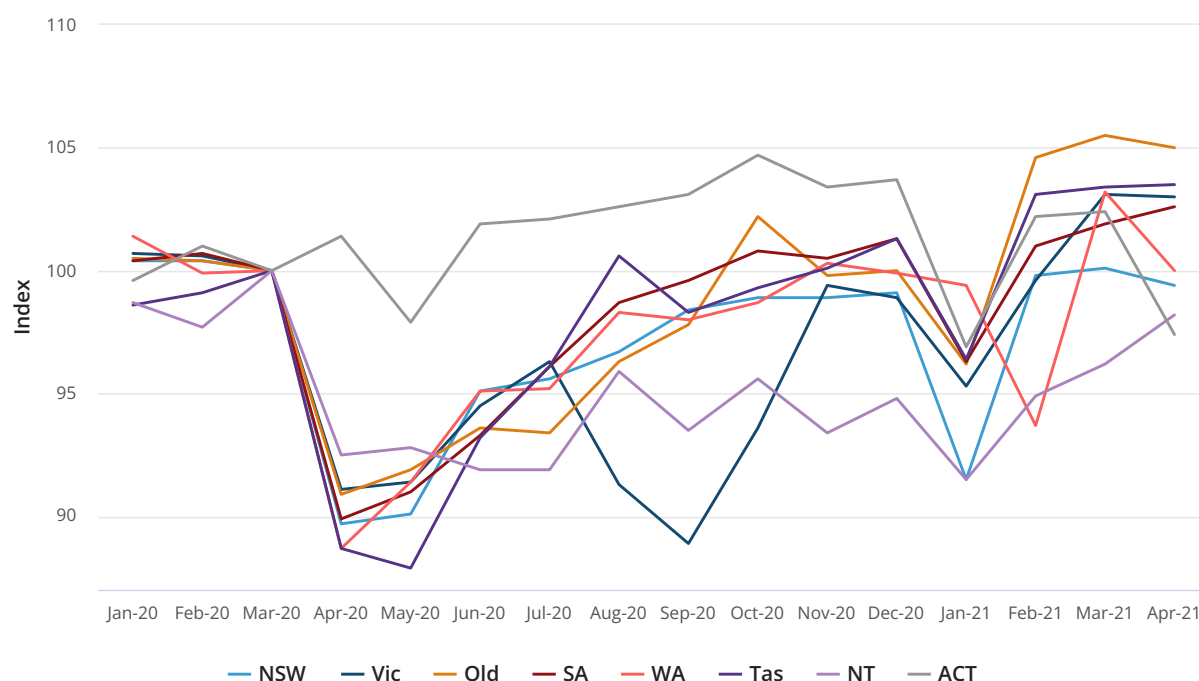
Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

States and territories

Chart 3 shows the changes in hours worked in the states and territories, indexed to March 2020. Hours worked in most states and territories had recovered to the level in March 2020, just before the start of the COVID pandemic. The Northern Territory has remained consistently below its March 2020 level, though this partly reflects its employment and hours coming off a recent peak at that time.

Hours worked over the COVID period have been impacted by lockdowns and other restrictions that have been in place across the country. The lockdowns in Victoria in the second half of 2020 resulted in falls in hours worked in August and September, followed by periods of strong growth as Victoria recovered above the March 2020 level.

Chart 3: Hours worked index, States and territories, Seasonally adjusted



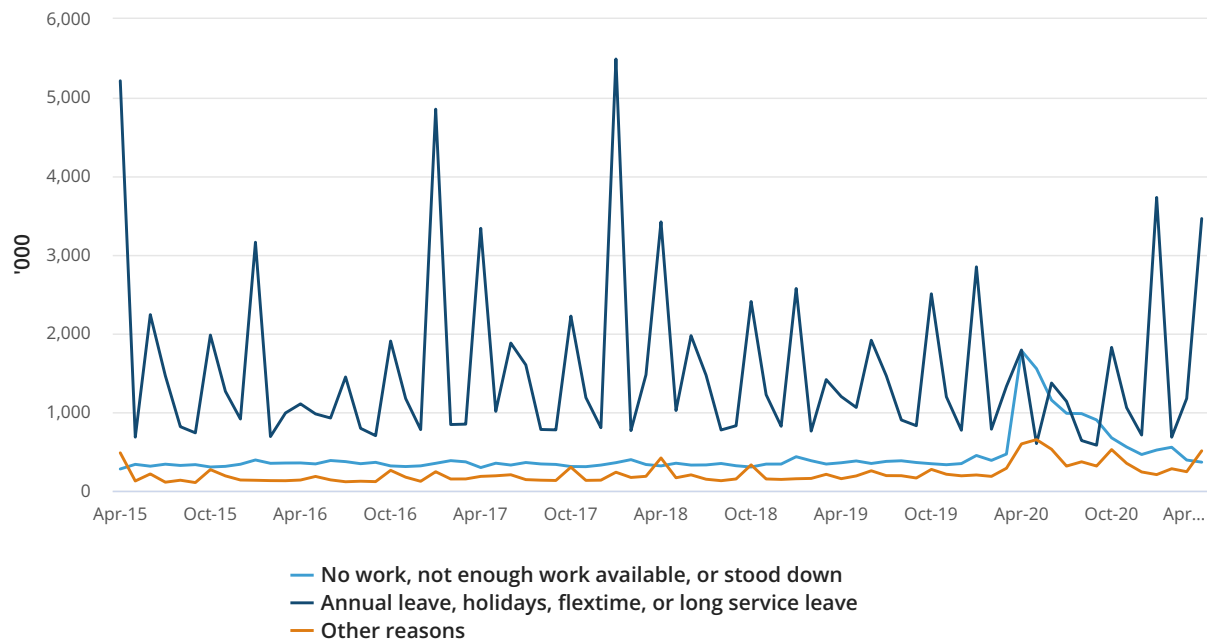
Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 19 and 19a

People working fewer hours

Chart 4 shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours. There were 3,461,900 people who worked fewer (or no) hours in April 2021 due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave. This was similar to April 2018 when the survey reference period also contained a similar amount of the the Easter public and school holidays.

The number of people working fewer (or no) hours for economic reasons decreased slightly to 363,400, while those working fewer (or no) hours for other reasons increased from 242,100 to 507,600. People reporting 'other reasons' is often elevated around Easter, as seen in April 2018 (which, like 2021, included Easter Sunday and Easter Monday) and April 2015 (which included all four days of the Easter weekend).

Chart 4: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all,

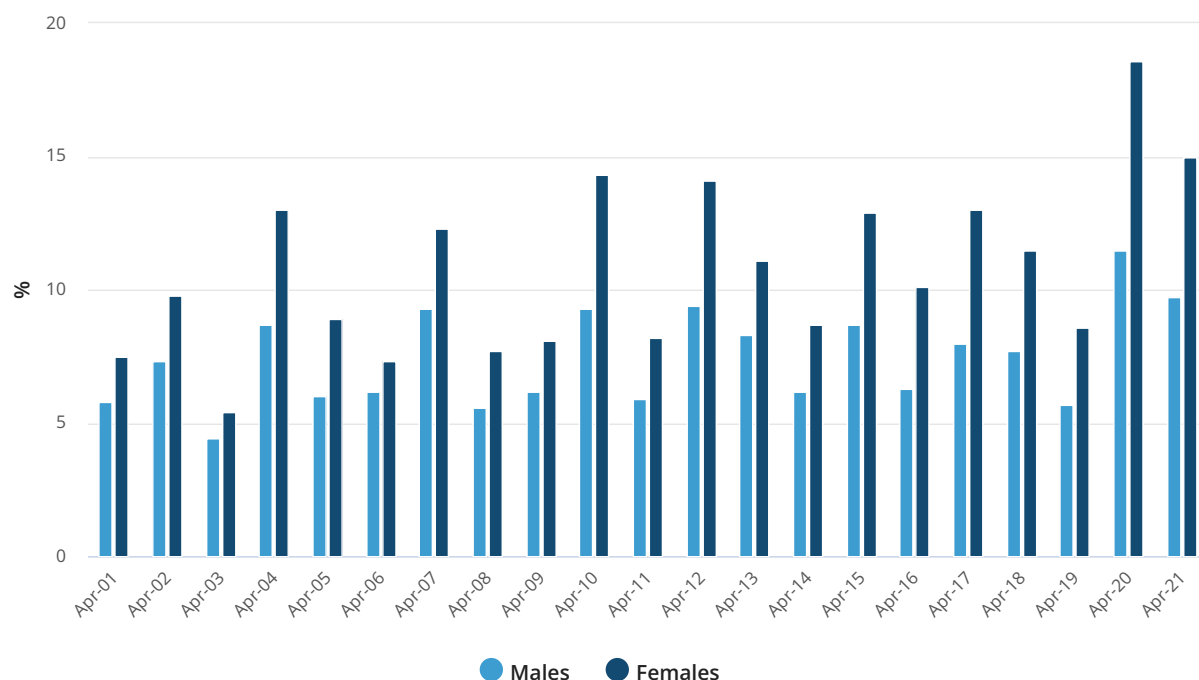


Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

People working zero hours

Chart 5 shows the proportion of employed people who worked zero hours in April over the past 20 years, which remained above pre-COVID Aprils, including both April 2015 and April 2018.

Chart 5: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original

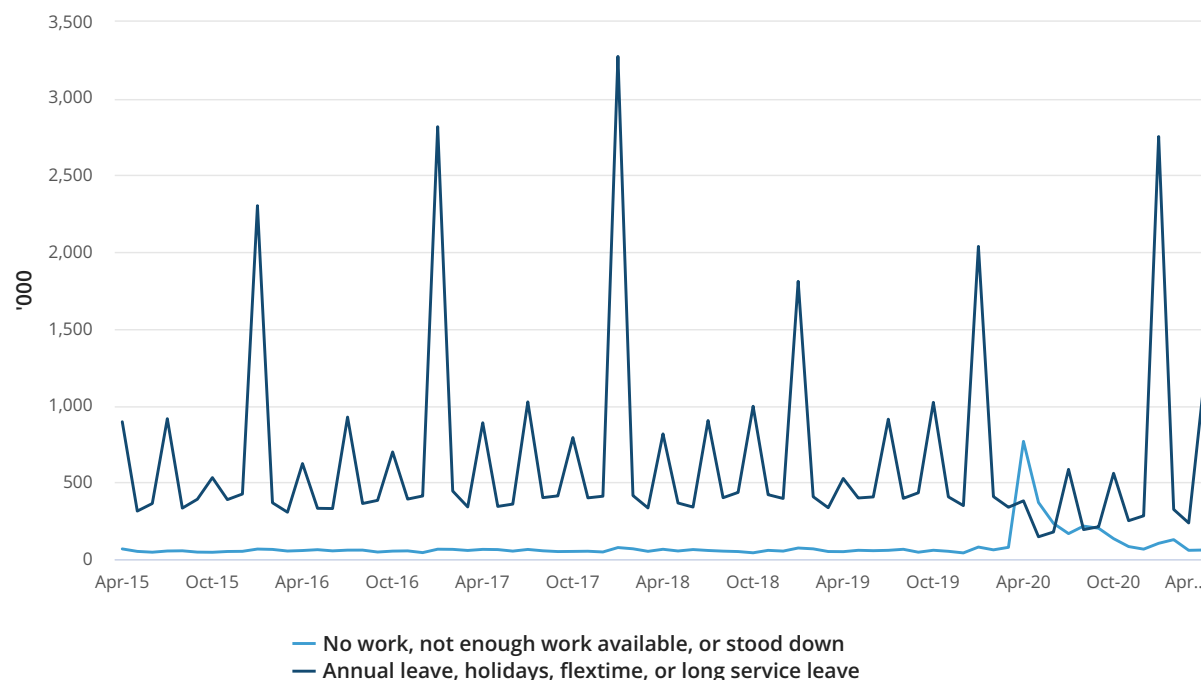


Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 6 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons, and due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave. As with people working fewer hours, there is a distinct seasonal pattern to people taking leave, with large increases each January. In April 2021, over 1,134,000 employed people worked zero hours due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave. This was larger than April in previous years, including both April 2015 and April 2018.

The number of employed people working zero hours for economic reasons was 58,900 in April 2021, well below the peak of 767,000 in April 2020.

Chart 6: Employed people working zero hours, Selected reasons, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

Table 1 shows the number of employed people working zero hours for economic reasons in each state or territory, highlighting the very large increases in people working zero hours for economic reasons across the country in April 2020, and the second wave impacts in Victoria in August and September 2020. It also shows the effects of more recent lockdowns, including the lockdown in Western Australia in the first week of February 2021.

Table 1: Employed people working zero hours for economic reasons, by Stat

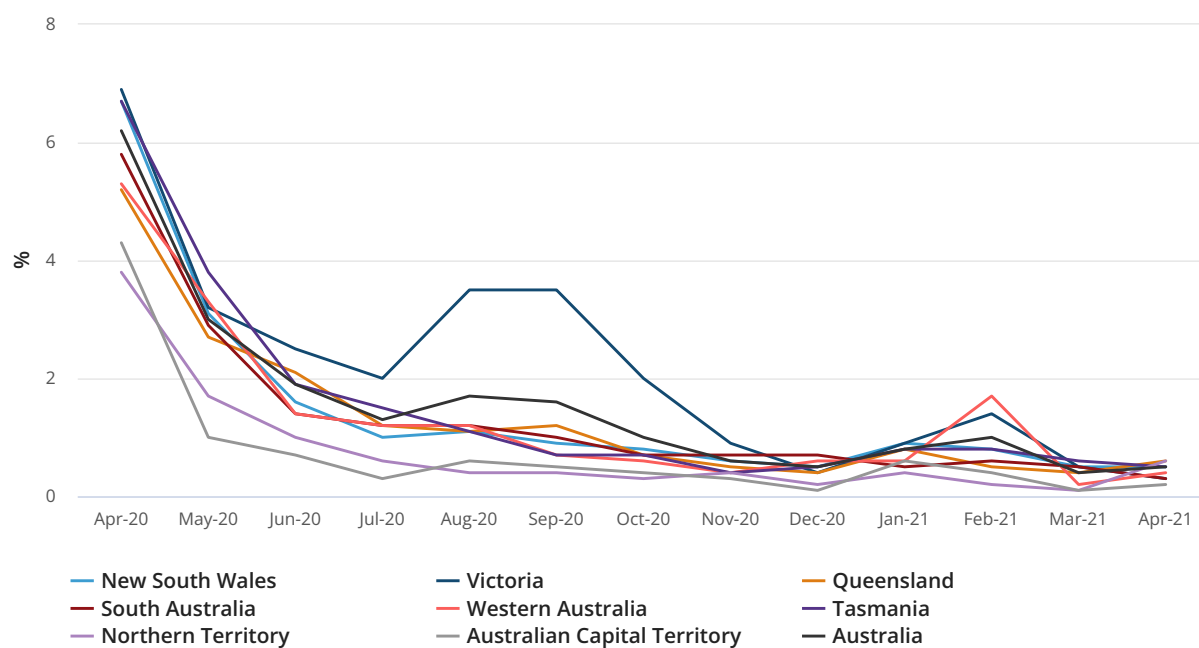
	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20
	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)	('000)
New South Wales	261.1	121.5	63.8	41.7	45.6	35.9	32	24.5	
Victoria	229.7	102.7	80.6	65.3	112.2	113	66.1	31	
Queensland	126.8	64.9	51	28.4	26.4	31.1	18.2	12.4	

	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20
South Australia	47.9	23.7	11.6	9.6	10	8.1	5.6	6.1	
Western Australia	69.4	42.1	17.7	15.4	15.8	9.3	7.9	5.3	
Tasmania	16.9	9.2	4.6	3.8	2.7	1.6	1.8	1.1	
Northern Territory	5.1	2.3	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	
Australian Capital Territory	10	2.2	1.6	0.8	1.4	1.1	0.9	0.7	
Australia	766.8	368.5	232.2	165.8	214.7	200.8	133	81.5	

Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b

Chart 7 shows the proportion of employed people in each state and territory who worked zero hours for economic reasons.

Chart 7: Proportion of employed people working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and territory, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b and Labour Force, Australia Table 12

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